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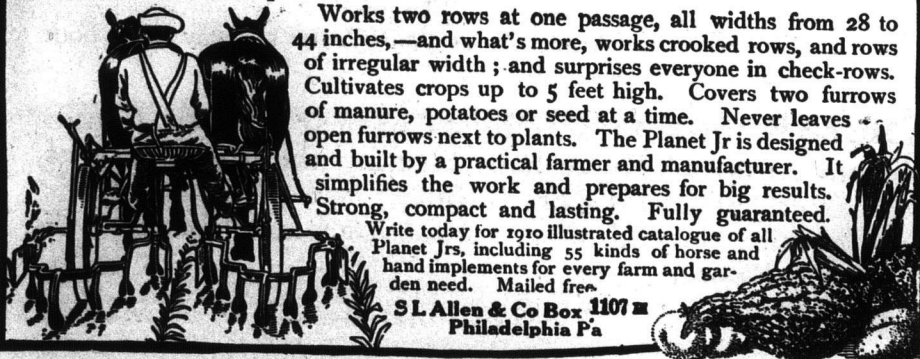
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ters, alas, I have lost in spiritual."

"You are still the bishop, monseigneur! You would still teach us humility! I find you a delightful instructor."

"And I, you, madame; and I, you."

"Ha, ha, you mock me!"

"Not I, princess. I heartily admire you."

Again he bent down, and kissed the snowy hand.

At this moment, a roll of drums in the street and the clattering of horsemen told him that the emperor had returned before his time.

The Princess of Hatzfeld arose, and listened.

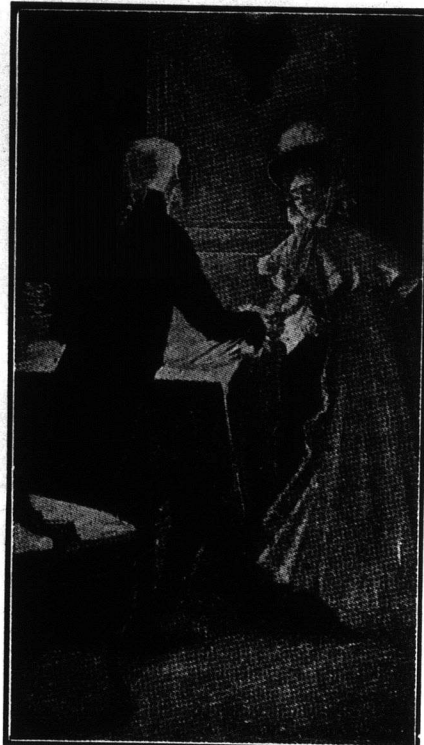
"The emperor is here!" she exclaimed quickly.

"No, no! They are but relieving the guard. Yet it is getting late." Talleyrand left his chair and took up the princess's cloak, which she had cast aside.

"It is wise that you should now return. I will speak to the emperor in your husband's behalf. Allow me, madame."

"Many thanks, monseigneur. Will you help me with it near the light? It has tiresome hooks. It is convenient to have a lamp upon the table. Now."

Prince de Talleyrand had the cloak in both hands. He assisted the Princess of Hatzfeld to assume it. When this was done the princess turned to him with a certain document in her hands. Before he could stay her, she rent it in half, and then again, and let the pieces flutter to the floor.



"You have by that one act destroyed your husband."

"Princess, you have by that one act destroyed your husband!"

"No, monseigneur, by that one act I may have saved him."

"Better go, madame. You could not now face the emperor. Come with me to your coach."

"I shall stay here."

"Very good. With your own hands you have slain your husband."

The rattle of muskets, without the corridor, proclaimed the coming of Napoleon.

The princess at once took up her station by the door, while Talleyrand stood by the table.

A little, sallow man in a gray overcoat and a large black military hat came quickly in, muttering to himself.

"Sire!"

He passed the kneeling woman at the door, apparently unconscious of her presence.

He paused in the middle of the room, and stood there, with his hands locked behind his back. He still continued to mutter, and every now and then the occupants of the cabinet heard him mention numbers.

"Twenty-five thousand—yes, and thirteen thousand,—are thirty-eight thousand."

The Princess of Hatzfeld arose, and, advancing to Napoleon, fell on her knees at her feet.

"Sire!"

He saw her then, but made no attempt to raise her; neither did he re-

move his hat. He turned to Talleyrand.

"Who is this woman?" he asked, abruptly.

"Sire, the Princess of Hatzfeld."

"What do you desire of me, madame?"

"Sire, my husband's life!"

"Your husband's life? You already know it is forfeited through his treachery."

"Sire, he has never broken faith with you. I swear it! Sire, he is under arrest, and cannot defend himself. You have been misinformed regarding him. Oh, listen to me,—to me, his wife, and your most strong ally. Listen to me!"

She wrung her hands in her fierce entreaty. Napoleon did not move, nor make any reply. But his searching, terrible, gray-blue eyes never shifted from her beautiful, upturned face,—that face with the lovely lashes again jeweled with tears.

"Oh, sire, if I knew, or thought, that you had any proof or blame against the prince, my husband, I would not dare to plead thus for his life. But I know that he is innocent. All this day, since five o'clock in the morning until now, I have waited, and waited, hour by hour, to see you. Look into my face, sire see how weary and faint I am; consider my agony—oh, consider it,—and, in the absence of any proof of his guilt, give my husband back to me!"

Napoleon turned to Talleyrand and held out his hand, as if for some document. Talleyrand hobbled round to the little box, and, unlocking it, brought forth the fatal letter. This he handed to Napoleon and the latter handed it to the kneeling princess.

"Whose handwriting is that, madame?"

The princess eagerly ran her eye down the lines, turned sick, and, with a cry, let the paper fall. The two men exchanged glances.

"Is that your husband's writing, madame?"

Sobs were the only reply,—from a bent and utterly crushed woman.

Napoleon regarded this figure of awful grief, and hopeless despair, and an expression came over his face which few men had seen.

It was an expression of pity.

"Talleyrand!"

"Sire?"

"What other proof of the Prince of Hatzfeld's treachery have we in our possession?"

"None other, sire."

"Princess," said Napoleon, bending and pressing the lady's ear in a manner familiar with him, "put that letter in the fire, yonder, and then we shall have no proof."

"Oh, sire!"

"Yes, yes. You believed. I can see it. You did not know. You are a beautiful woman. If he had been as true as you are beautiful, it would have been better. Put the letter in the fire."

The princess covered Napoleon's hand with kisses, and rose and cast the letter into the flames. Oh, the happy, happy sparks that flew upward!

"Princess," said Talleyrand, and he bowed; "no man with such a wife but can amend his conduct. I offer my congratulations."

"Thank you, monseigneur."

"I shall inform the emperor how useful a member you would make in his cabinet of diplomatists."

"Thank you, monseigneur."

Napoleon sat at the table and began to scrawl "Nap" on the kind and cruel documents.

The princess of Hatzfeld approached him.

"Sire," she said, "I, too, need a pardon; with my own hands I destroyed the warrant for my husband. It is in four pieces at your feet."

Napoleon looked down but made no reply.

"Farewell, sire; by this one act tonight you have gained a victory your army could not give you. You have won a woman's love to your empire and your imperial crown; and it will not rest there, for, when this one woman tells her story, all the women of this country, conquered though it be, will cry with me. As I cry tonight, vive l'empereur!"